

TINY, FABULOUS WEDDINGS

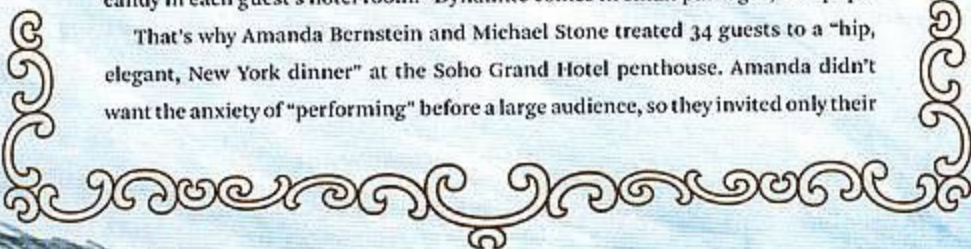
FIND OUT
WHY DISCERNING
COUPLES ARE
ESCHEWING
LARGE WEDDINGS
IN FAVOR OF
SHORT GUEST LISTS,
BIG SPLURGES
AND CREATIVE
EXTRAS

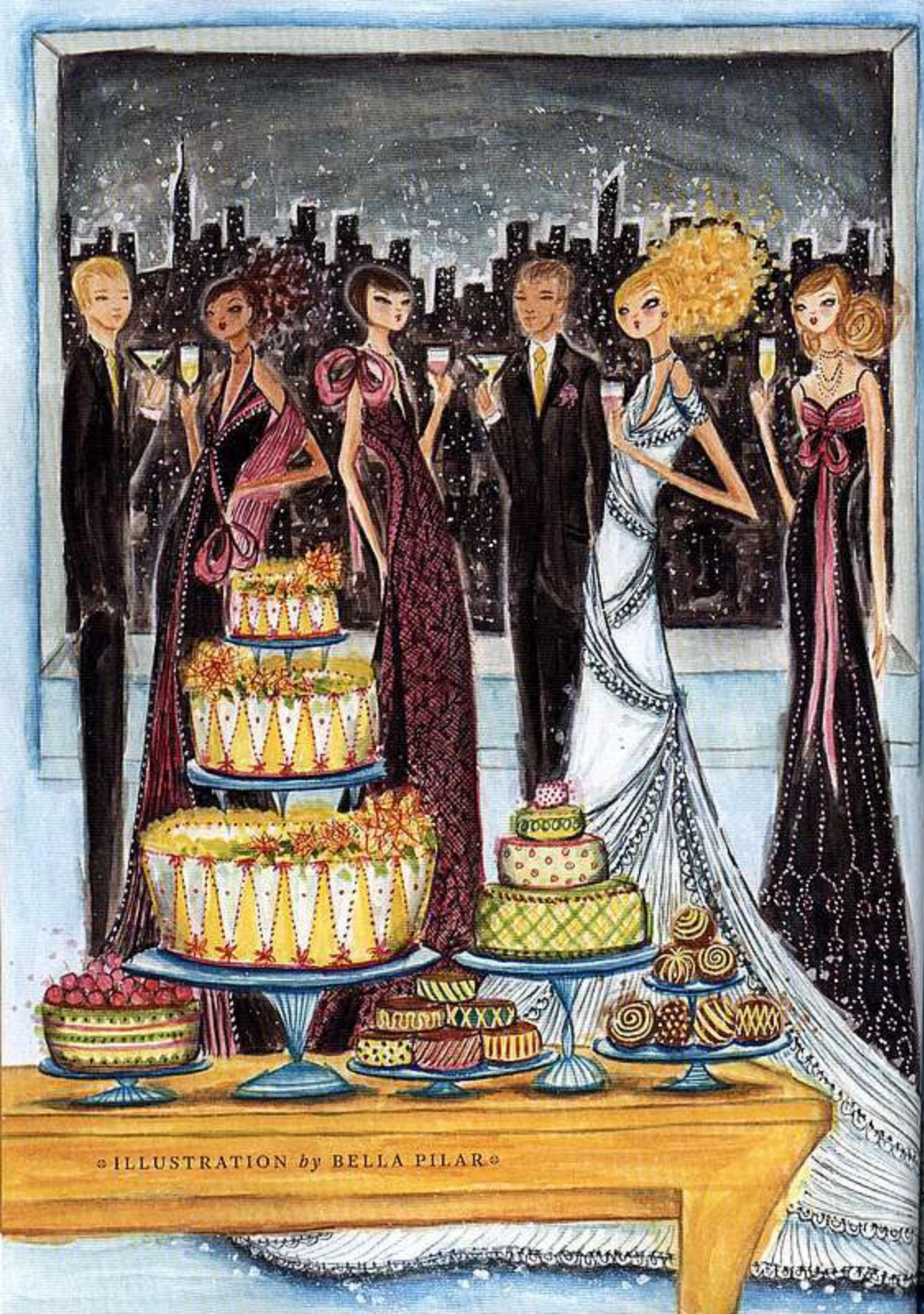
by
Zibby Right

FOR MANY BRIDES, ENTERTAINING HUNDREDS OF GUESTS ISN'T THE IDEAL way to spend a wedding day. So instead, they are opting out of the big-bash tradition and throwing smaller, intimate, yet utterly fabulous weddings. They're trading in lengthy guest lists and receiving lines for luxurious venues, decadent cuisine, spectacular decor, and musical indulgences for their closest friends and families.

Über-planner Colin Cowie of New York City sees big-wedding backlash among many of his clients: "Couples want to have quality time with their friends instead of spending four hours with people from their parents' workplaces." A smaller event can be more over-the-top, Cowie says, because you have access to better resources. You can serve magnums of champagne or offer turndown service with personalized candy in each guest's hotel room. "Dynamite comes in small packages," he quips.

That's why Amanda Bernstein and Michael Stone treated 34 guests to a "hip, elegant, New York dinner" at the Soho Grand Hotel penthouse. Amanda didn't want the anxiety of "performing" before a large audience, so they invited only their





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very closest loved ones. (If the couple spoke to the person at least once a week, he made the cut.) The small size allowed them to splurge on the venue, New York City's most exclusive penthouse suite, which has hosted celebrities including Halle Berry, Bruce Willis and Mariah Carey. Incredible views of the cityscape, total privacy and a modern feel made the space unique. Seating wasn't an issue with one table for friends and one for family, each adorned with calla lilies and pale-green orchids. The food (appetizers including tuna tartare on Asian spoons and Cambodian beef skewers, expertly prepared filet mignon au poivre with french fries and haricots verts, and lobster tails with a spring risotto) was "unbelievable" and "just kept coming!" And with five waiters for 34 guests, the service was unusually attentive.

NYC planner Marcy Blum has put together several intimate weddings because "some couples just know too many people." One white tie-and-tails fete for 40 in a museum-quality private home featured an eight-course tasting menu paired with "fabulous wines" on an ornately decorated table, with different silverware for each course. "With a smaller event, every item is under a microscope," Blum says.

THE DIFFERENCE IS IN THE DETAILS

While creating their guest list, Lorelei Komm and Spencer Keim realized they could invite 400 people—or 33. A huge wedding seemed "too stressful," so Lorelei and her San Francisco-based event planner, Kristi Amoroso, designed a five-course luncheon at Fogarty Winery outside San Francisco, with two chamber musicians as entertainment. Classic food was most important to Lorelei, so she planned a rustic, family-style feast, which included antipasto, mozzarella-

and-tomato salad, roasted meats, pasta and a three-tiered, white-on-white, polka-dot cake in the shape of a gift box with a giant bow. Guests were too full to partake of the chocolate truffles, cookies and petits

fours, but they filled boxes to go.

Britons Sarah Haynes and Chris Allcock hosted a 25-person wedding at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York. Tamara Schlueter of the Waldorf organized everything, including the Union Jack flag flying outside the hotel on the wedding day. The autumnal decorations of the Conrad Suite featured a giant arch of leaves from Central Park (which was reassembled after the ceremony in the reception area). One long banquet table was adorned with arrangements of red ti leaves, bronze orchids, white hydrangeas, chocolate and peach roses and mango-colored candles. The single, long table made the celebration feel particularly intimate; all the guests—including the newlyweds—could see one another as they dined. Guests danced to Hank Lane Orchestra music after photographer Dave Cross stopped traffic to take pictures of the bridal party running down Park Avenue.

The biggest drawback of a small wedding, brides say, is cutting friends and family from the list. Sarah took some flack from pals in the U.K. who didn't make the cut. "We actually had a number of people ask us if they could come and we had to say no!" she says. After explaining why, Sarah delighted disgruntled friends by inviting them to a later, more casual celebration. Lorelei also had "too many close friends," so opted to invite only family. "Some friends wanted to be there and I felt bad, but our priorities didn't allow it," she says. "All of our guests said they felt honored to be there. We all had an incredible time together."

TINY, FABULOUS BUDGETS

<i>Couple</i>	<i>Guests</i>	<i>Splurges</i>	<i>Cost per guest</i>
Lorelei Komm & Spencer Keim	33	Their wedding planner, Kristi Amoroso (they'd hired her for a huge wedding, but retained her for a party of 33); preeminent photographer Todd Rafalovich.	\$848
Sarah Haynes & Chris Allcock	25	The venue (NYC's historic Waldorf-Astoria hotel); the flowers, including a giant arch constructed of Central Park leaves.	\$1,200
Renee Pinzi & Joseph Pelliccione	15	Couture invitations; live, classical music by the Manhattan Swing Orchestra; personalized keepsake albums for each guest.	\$2,916
TuAnh Nguyen & Cuong Tran	30	Her Reem Acra dress and veil; billiards tables for the after-party; wedding-night accommodations for all guests.	\$3,723

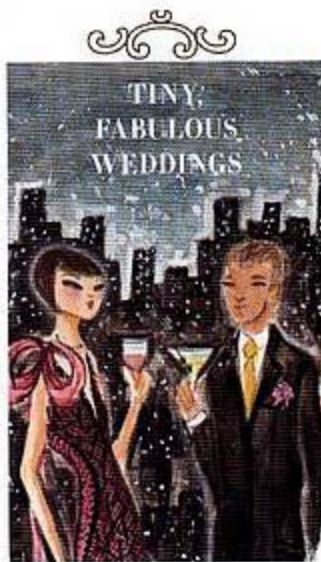
THE SHOWSTOPPING SPLURGES

Spending time with guests was a priority for Californians TuAnh Nguyen and Cuong Tran, who rented out Wheatleigh, a mansion in Lenox, MA, for the big day. Knowing that their 30 guests would incur substantial travel expenses, they made the event well worth their efforts to attend (and covered the costs of their guests' wedding-night accommodations). TuAnh's unique style informed the design of their pink-and-brown cherry-blossom letter-pressed invitations and travel booklets. "When our guests saw the invitations, they knew the wedding would be over-the-top," she says. Fittingly, TuAnh chose a duchesse satin Reem Acra dress with crystals and gold embroidery, and Stuart Weitzman gold sandals.

The couple packed the weekend with parties. On the eve of the wedding, guests were treated to a New England-clambake welcome dinner. There was also an after-party by the pool, with floating candles, daybeds for lounging, and passed chocolate desserts. After midnight, guests moved back into the dining room for "game night", playing billiards, Jenga and other games until after 3:00 a.m., while nibbling finger foods. All of this would not have been possible with a guest list of 300. "Cuong and I loved having a small wedding," TuAnh says. "We were able to do a lot more with our budget, and to spend time with each and every guest."

Renee Pinzi and Joseph Pelliccione knew they wanted a luxurious, intimate wedding. The couple opted for a 15-person dinner in the old Astor Mansion at the St. Regis, in New York. Jennifer Zabinski, of NYC's Wedding Library by Claudia Hanlin and Jennifer Zabinski, handled everything from the favor boxes with almonds, mints and monogrammed Gail Watson sugar cookies to Watson's two-tiered cake with white ribbons, roses and calla lilies, mirroring the centerpieces. Zabinski also commissioned a full stationery package with Italian-made, hand-painted, hand-torn, pale-blue opalescent invitations, menu cards, thank-you notes and matching keepsake albums for all the guests, with an invitation and handwritten poem (specially chosen by the couple for the occasion) inside. She also hired a piano player and singer for cocktails and a five-piece orchestra for dinner.

Couples splurge on music by hiring well-known bands, celebrity DJs and famous artists, reports NYC-based superstar DJ David Chang, who has worked at weddings alongside big names like Aretha Franklin and Earth Wind & Fire.



"Music is key," agrees Valerie Romanoff of NYC-based Starlight Orchestras. It pulls all the elements of a small wedding together by creating the mood. (Just make sure the dance floor is appropriate to the size of the group: Five square feet per likely-to-dance guest is the industry standard, says Chang.)

Opera singers and a 15th century-style band in powdered wigs performed at the blockbuster three-day wedding David Tutera planned for Michelle Love and Richard Klarchek in Palm Beach, FL. With a small wedding, Tutera says, you can truly pamper guests. He sent limos to transport guests from the airport and between events. A creative present await-

ed them each night, including a Venetian mask and antique scroll announcing a black-tie masquerade ball. "Having a tiny, fabulous wedding is really about capturing that intimacy and doing things that are unique," Tutera says.

And with a small size, you can personalize every detail, says Loulie Walker of NYC-based Loulie Walker Events. She planned a *Nutcracker*-themed wedding for one Connecticut couple, decorating the Presidential Suite of the Plaza Hotel with evergreens, holiday stockings and ornaments. After dinner, guests gathered around the piano for carols (one was rewritten to include every attendee's name). A carefully chosen flower awaited each guest at one intimate wedding coordinated by NYC-based event planner Bronson van Wyck. On each seat, he placed a flower that was indigenous to that guest's hometown, including a peach blossom for a friend

from Georgia and an apple blossom for a cousin from Arkansas.

Planner Mindy Weiss of Los Angeles advocates involving all the guests in the ceremony, as Lorelei and Spencer

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did when they passed their rings around on pillows for everyone to bless. Weiss recently planned a wedding for 20 at which guests, scattered around the room, each rose and read part of the service. With personal touches like these, it's not surprising that brides who opt for tiny weddings are thrilled in the end. "We loved our wedding so much," Lorelei says. "I always wanted a huge wedding, but that was going to take us so far away from the purpose of the day. The most important factor to us was to keep it intimate and focus on what was in our hearts. We loved every minute of it."

Zibby Right is a NYC-based writer. Her work has appeared in Shape, Self and Quest, where she is a contributing editor.